

Beech

Fagus grandifolia Ehrh.

American beech is the only beech native to the U.S. It has a limited range in Missouri, restricted mostly to well-drained, sandy soils in southeast Missouri.

Beech wood varies in color from nearly white sapwood to reddish-brown heartwood in some trees. Sometimes there is very little difference between the sapwood and heartwood. The bark is gray-blue, thin and quite smooth. The wood is fine-grained, with little grain character, but has a distinctly visible ray fleck. It is hard, strong, stiff and shock-resistant. It dresses smoothly and sands to a high polish. When steamed, it is easily bent. The wood imparts no odor or taste and consequently is widely used for food containers.

Beech has a large percentage of shrinkage and requires careful drying. It turns well on a lathe and is rather easily treated with preservatives. The wood is diffuse porous and the growth rings are distinct.

Beech, though not abundant in Missouri, is used extensively for furniture, chairs, turnings, brush backs, flooring, shoe lasts, tool handles, woodenware, drawer sides, bentwood parts, shuttles, spools and bobbins. When treated, it is suitable for railroad ties. It accepts a variety of stains well and is also suited to lacquer or varnish finishes of good quality. In addition, it is used in boxes, crates and pallets. It is good for home workshop use where available and properly dried.



Hoss

